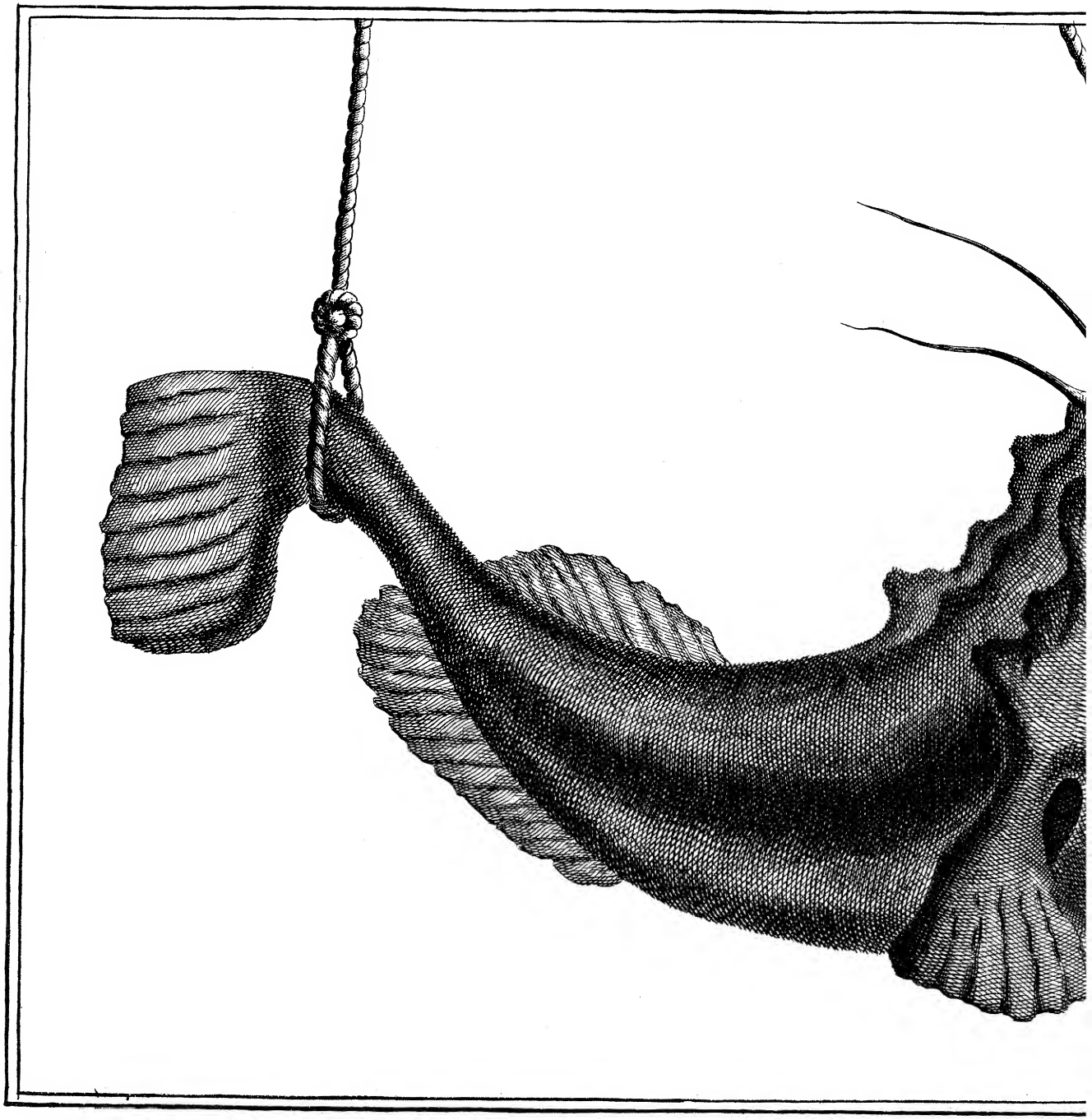
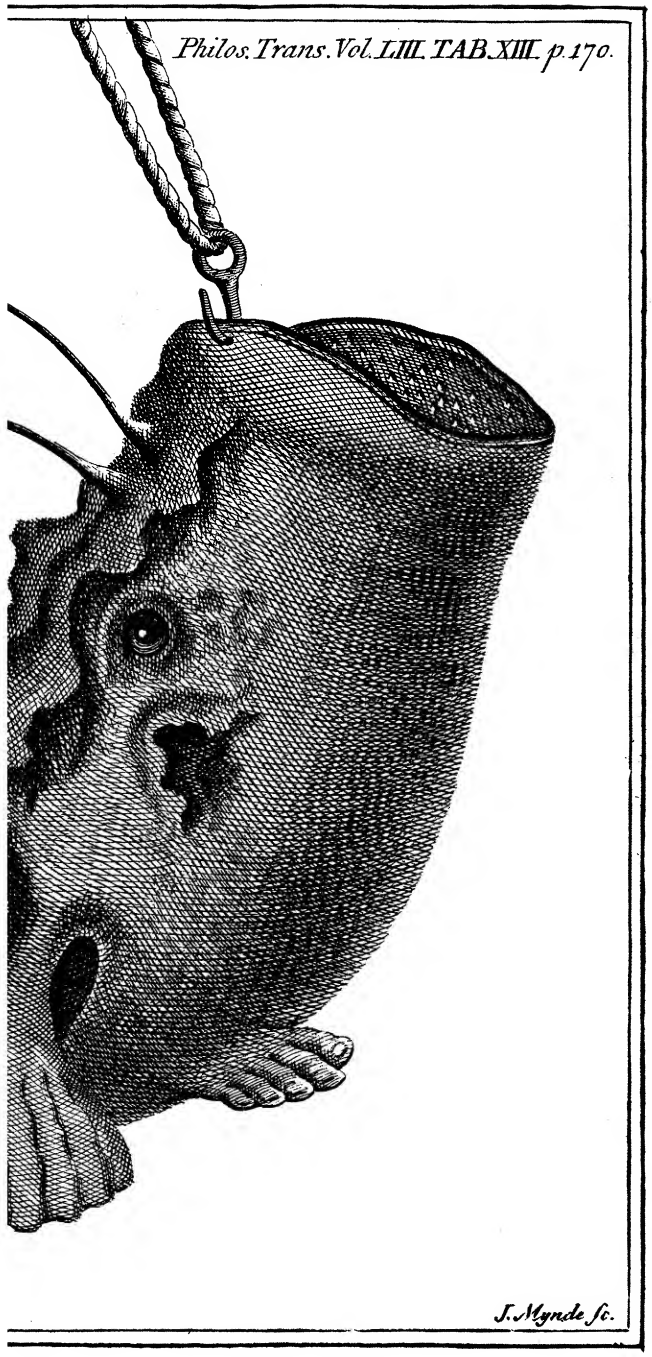
XXX. *An Account of a remarkable Fiſh, taken in* King-Road, *near* Briſtol: *In a Letter from Mr.* James Ferguſon, *to* Thomas Birch, *D. D. Secret. R. S.*

Reverend Sir, Briſtol, May 5th 1763.

Read June 2d, 1763. I Herewith take the liberty of ſending you a drawing of a very uncommon kind of fiſh [TAB. XIII.] which was lately caught in King-Road, a few miles from this city; and is now ſhewn at the Hot-Wells. It fought violently againſt the fiſher-man's boat, after they got it in their net, and was killed with very great difficulty. No body here can tell what fiſh it is, only ſome ſay it is a Sea Lion; but, to the beſt of my remembrance, it anſwers not to the deſcription or figure of the Sea Lion, that is given in Lord Anſon's voyage. I took the drawing on the ſpot, and do wiſh I had had my Indian Ink and Pencils, by which it might have been much better ſhaded; but I hope you'll excuſe the roughneſs of the draught, as it is the firſt I ever made with a pen.

The length of the fiſh is four feet nine inches, and the thickneſs in proportion as in the figure. The mouth is a foot in width, and of a ſquariſh form: it has three rows of ſharp ſmall teeth, very irregularly ſet, and at ſome diſtance from each other: it has no tongue, nor narrow gullet, but is all the way down, as far as one can ſee, like a great hollow tube: in the back of the mouth within, there are two openings like

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like noſtrils; and about nine inches below the jaw, and under theſe openings, are two large knobs, from which proceed ſeveral ſhort teeth; a little below which, on the breaſt ſide, is another knob with ſuch teeth. — On each ſide within, and about a foot below the jaws, there are three croſs ribs, ſomewhat reſembling the ſtraight bars of a chimney-grate, about an inch diſtant from each other; through which we ſee into a great cavity within the ſkin, towards the breaſt; and under the ſkin, theſe cavities are kept diſtended by longitudinal ribs, plain to the touch on the outſide. I put my arm down through the mouth, quite to my ſhoulder, but could feel nothing in the way; ſo that its heart, ſtomach, and bowels muſt lie in a very little compaſs near its tail, the body thereabout being very ſmall.

From the neck proceed two long horns, hard and very elaſtic, not jointed by rings as in lobſters: and on each ſide of the back there are two conſiderable ſharp edged riſings, of a black and long ſubſtance. Between each eye and the breaſt, there is a cavity ſomewhat like the inſide of a human ear; but it doth not penetrate to the inſide. From each ſhoulder proceeds a ſtrong muſcular fin, cloſe by which, towards the breaſt, is an opening, through which one may thruſt his hand and arm quite up through the mouth: and between theſe fins proceed from the breaſt two ſhort paws, ſomewhat like the fore half of a human foot, with five toes joined together, having the appearance of nails. Near the tail are two large fins, one on the back, the other under the belly. The ſkin is of a dark brown colour, but darker ſpotted in ſeveral places, and entirely without ſcales.

If you think this any way deſerves the notice of the Royal Society, I ſhall be very glad of your communicating it; and am, with the greateſt eſteem,

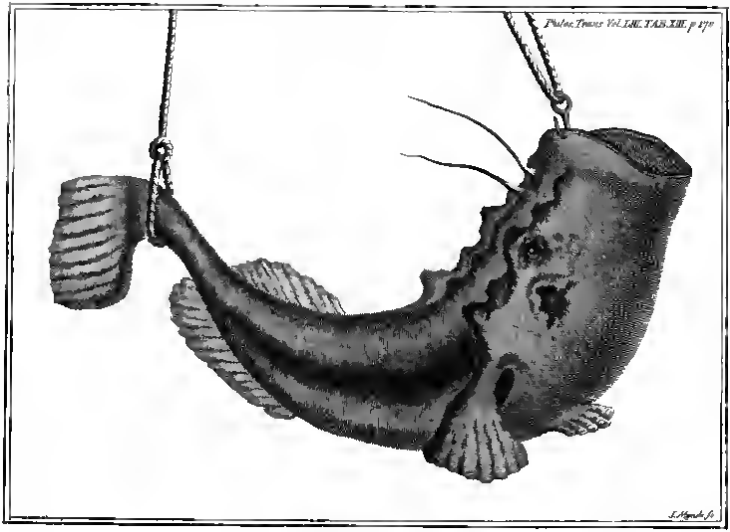
Reverend Sir,

Your moſt obliged humble Servant,

James Ferguſon.

The fiſh was kept in the poſition it is drawn, by two cords; one of which was hooked into its upper jaw, and the other tied round it near the tail: the other ends of the cords being tied to a ſtick above.

XXXI. *Rules*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